

**House International Relations Committee
Subcommittee on Europe and Emerging Threats
Statement of Chairman Elton Gallegly**

Markup of H. Res. 578

February 14, 2006

The second item on the agenda is House Resolution 578, a resolution introduced by Congressman Chris Smith, the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations, which calls on the Government of Romania to decrease the barriers to domestic and intercountry adoptions.

Since the fall of Communism in 1989, there has been little improvement in the condition of Romanian children in state-run orphanages and other institutions. UNICEF has reported that more than 9,000 children are abandoned each year and according to the European Union approximately 49,000 children lack permanent homes.

On January 1, 2005, a new law in Romania resulted in a prohibition on intercountry adoptions except in the rare case of a child's biological grandparent. This law went into effect despite a waiting list of thousands of children without a mother or father. At the time of enactment, about 1,500 adoption applications were already registered with the Romanian government, including 200 children that had been matched with their new parents.

I am a cosponsor and strong supporter of House Resolution 578. Allowing intercountry adoption offers the advantage of a family to children whose prospects in this world are otherwise bleak. For the sake of all those children in need of a stable family and a stable home environment, Congress should go on record in support of improved care for Romanian children and for Romania to ease the barriers for international adoptions.

I urge the passage of House Resolution 578. I will now recognize Congressman Wexler for the purposes of making a statement.